

# The Relationship Between Anxiety and Responses to Politically Charged Images

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## BACKGROUND

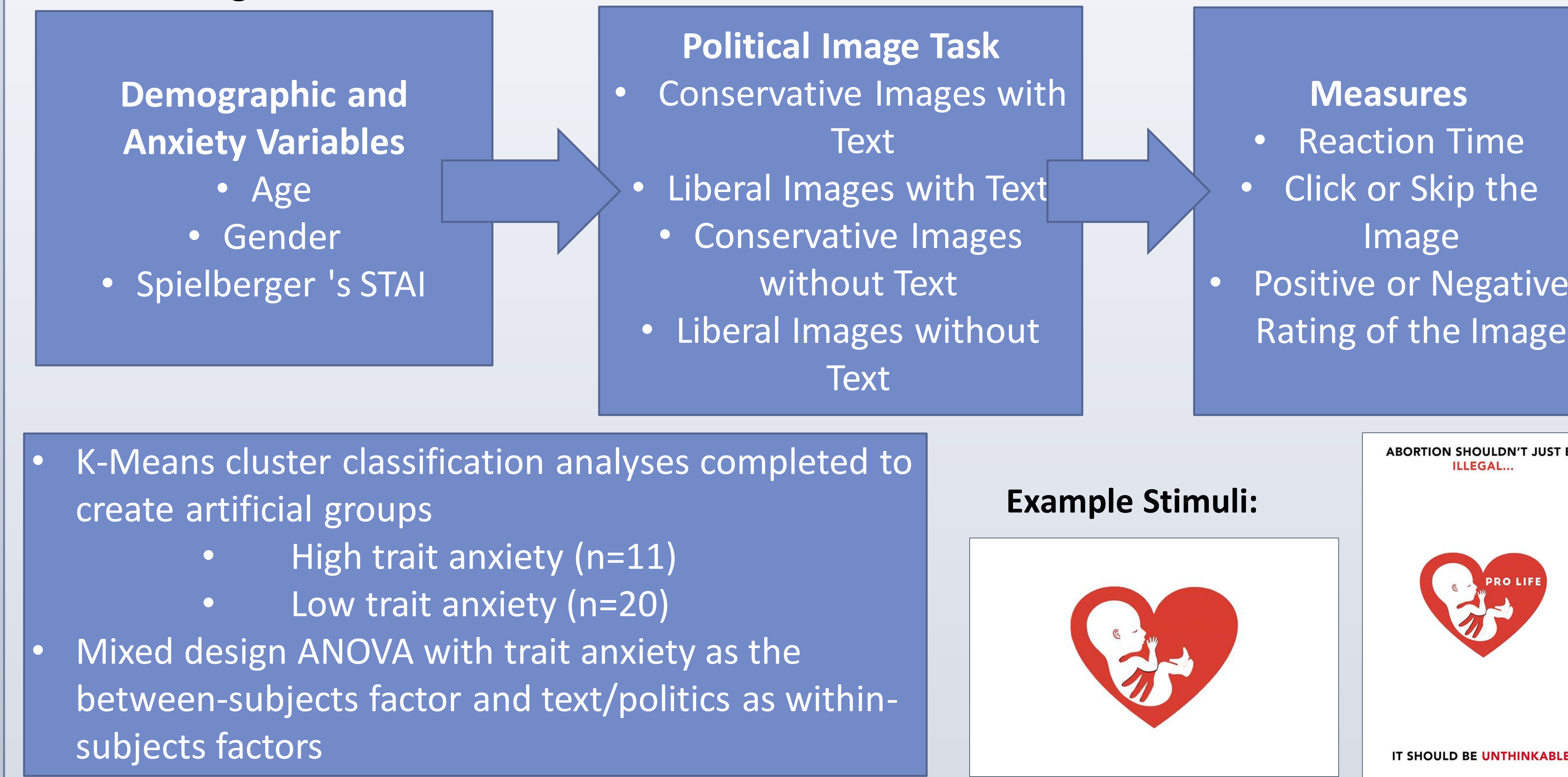
- In recent decades, social media use has dramatically increased
  - Higher exposure to political content and propaganda
- The use of politically-charged information of opposing views has been shown to further strengthen one's original views on Twitter (Bail et al., 2018)
- Previous research suggests attention is focused toward threats (Mogg et al., 1994)
- In the context of politics, anxiety is shown to influence an individual to be more critical of information (Marcus & Mackuen, 1993)
- Recent research on a youth population suggests that youth with high levels of anxiety tended to worry more about political problems (Caporino et al., 2020)
- The current study can provide an original understanding as to how generational anxiety may influence interpretations of images on social media.

## OBJECTIVES

- To determine if trait anxiety influences reactions to political imagery:
  - Reaction time to an image
  - Whether individuals choose to engage in an image
  - How positively or negatively individuals rate an image
- Hypothesis 1: The level of trait anxiety will influence participants reaction time to engage with the image.
- Hypothesis 2: The level of trait anxiety will influence participants rating to either a positive or negative image.

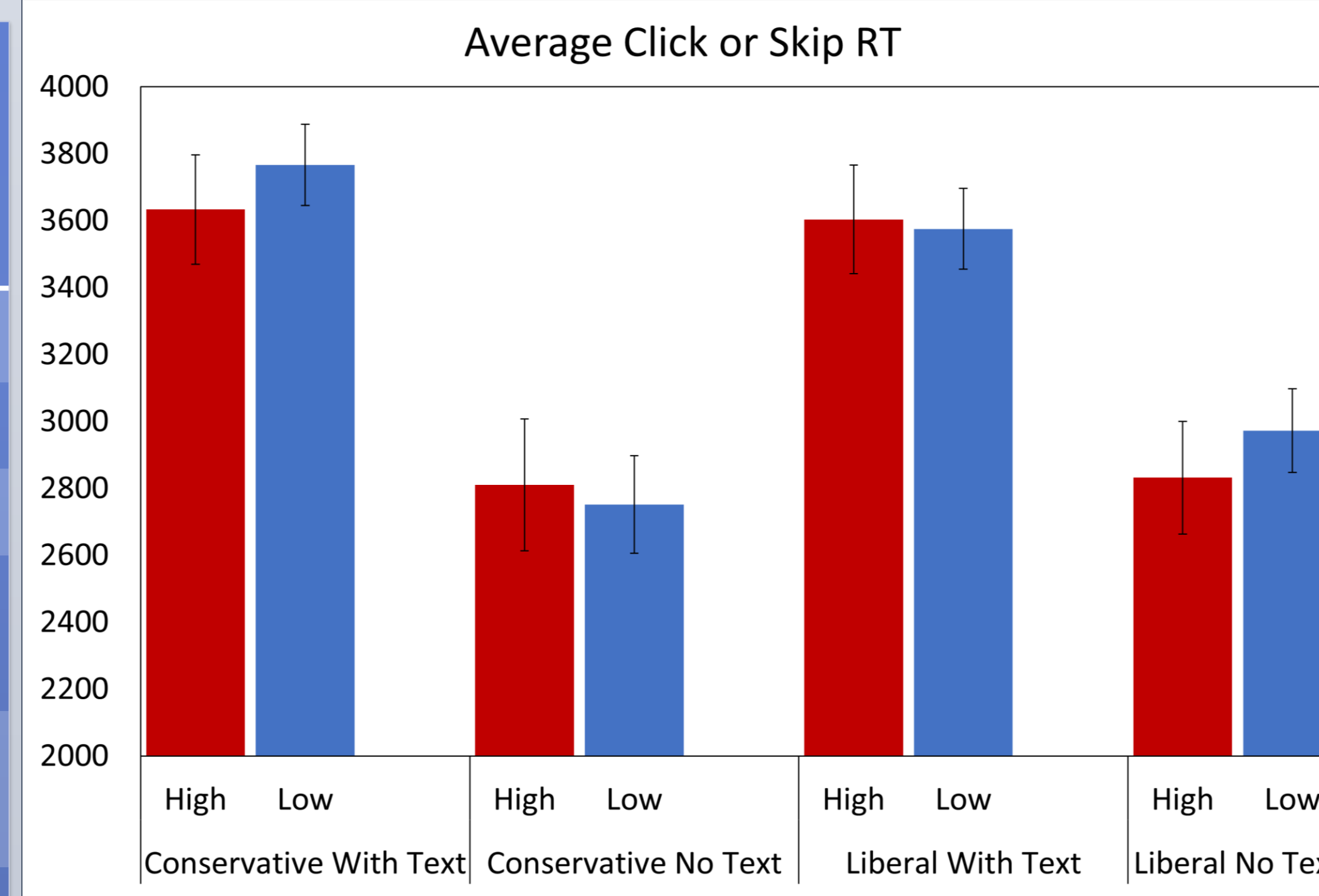
## MATERIALS AND METHODS

N = 31 undergraduate students

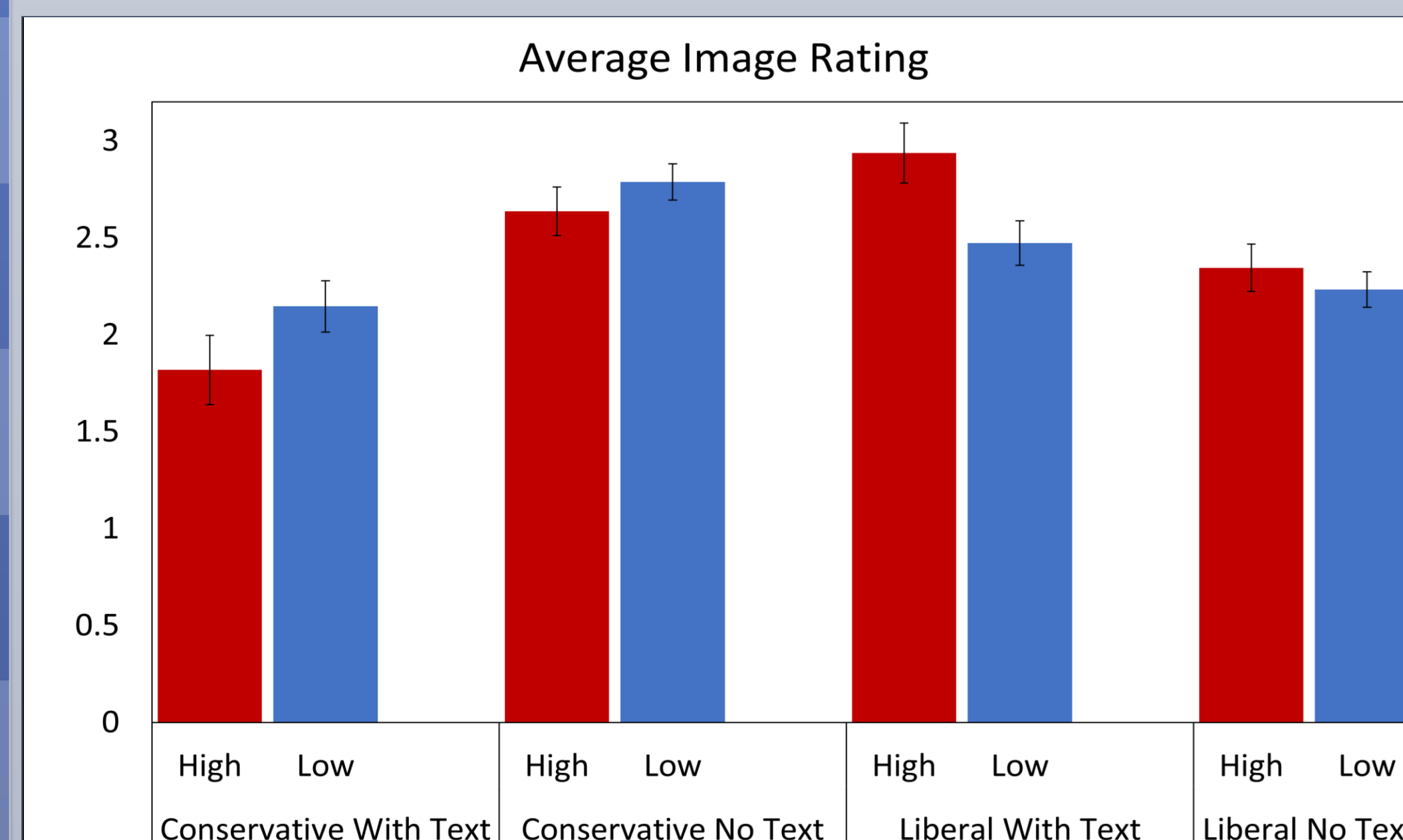


## RESULTS

Variables	High Trait Anxiety – Mean (std. Error)	Low Trait Anxiety – Mean (std. Error)
Trait Anxiety	53.36(2.35)	33.20(1.25)
Age	20.73(1.737)	20.95(2.481)
Gender (M:F)	2:9	9:11
C/S RT Cons w/ Text	3632.78(163.36)	3766.56(121.15)
C/S RT Cons No Text	2810.05(197.2)	2751.53(146.25)
C/S RT Lib w/ Text	3603.09(162.33)	3575.30(120.39)
C/S RT Lib No Text	2831.58(168.57)	2971.86(125.01)
Image Rating Cons w/ Text	1.818(0.178)	2.146(0.132)
Image Rating Cons No Text	2.636(0.125)	2.788(0.093)
Image Rating Lib w/ Text	2.937(0.155)	2.472(0.115)
Image Rating Lib No Text	2.345(0.122)	2.233(0.091)



$F(1,29) = 3.659, p = 0.066$  (anxiety\*text\*politics)



$F(1,29) = 4.443, p = 0.044$  (anxiety\*text\*politics)

## CONCLUSIONS

- Less anxious
  - More time looking at:
    - Conservative images with text, in comparison to liberal images with text
      - Political alignment of image matters
- More anxious
  - Rate more positively:
    - Conservative images without text than liberal images without text
    - Liberal images with text more positively than conservative images with text
      - Similar pattern exhibited in low anxiety individuals
- These findings suggest that reactions to political images have to take into account levels of trait anxiety

## REFERENCES

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